

UK Government seeks to balance food-security & environmental sustainability

Criticism of the UK government's recently released Food Strategy for England policy has been unfair and the government has correctly prioritised domestic food production.

That's the view of Mark Lumsdon-Taylor, a partner at chartered accountants MacIntyre Hudson (MHA), who says, "The government's food strategy and response to the Dimbleby Report encountered a lot of criticism but the sector needs to take a more measured view,"

Most criticism focused on the watering down, or rejection, of proposals from the Dimbleby Report that aimed to promote healthier eating and environmental work in rural England.

"Although this is to be regretted critics miss that the government had to take account of recent events. The strategy the government did produce sensibly prioritises domestic food production.

"As Russia strangles the world's grain supply from the Ukraine this was undoubtedly the correct approach. As the strategy states: 'successful domestic production is what

gives us national resilience in an uncertain world'.

While this meant environmental priorities may have taken more of a back seat than expected, Russia's continued invasion of Ukraine and blockade of the Black Sea have forced the government's hand.

"However, the strategy still sets out a vision to maintain the current level of domestic food production while reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the environmental impacts of the food system, in line with net zero commitments and biodiversity targets.

This ambition shows the government is still trying to bring together the twin goals of food-security and environmental sustainability. It has become a more difficult balance to achieve recently but not an impossible one.

"Another hugely positive aim of the strategy is to place sustainable food production at the heart of education and learning. This has been far too long in coming. We pay less for our food than previous generations, but we appreciate it less: this needs to change," he adds.